UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/54/58
S/1999/7
5 January 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION
ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE
TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 30 December 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i.
of the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement by the Presidency of the European Union on Western Sahara issued on 29 December 1998 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hans Peter MANZ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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ANNEX

Statement on Western Sahara issued on 29 December 1998
by the Presidency of the European Union

The European Union reiterates its full support for the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara proposed by the Secretary-General, which aims at the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum on the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

While the European Union took note with satisfaction of the completion of the identification of more than 147,000 applicants to the referendum, it remains deeply concerned over the continuing differences on the issue of the three tribal groupings. This question, which has led to the halt of the identification work, has been a constant source of contention between the parties and subject to several compromise proposals.

In this context, the European Union warmly welcomes the arbitration presented to the parties by the Secretary-General in accordance with the United Nations Settlement Plan, in order to move the identification process forward.

The European Union also welcomes the unanimous decision of the Security Council, by its resolution 1215 (1998) of 17 December 1998, to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 January 1999 in order to allow for further consultations, in the hope that they will lead to an agreement on the various protocols without undermining the integrity of the proposed package of the Secretary-General or calling into question its main elements.

The European Union expects and sincerely hopes for fruitful consultations and fully supports the assessment of the Secretary-General that the implementation of his proposal would clearly demonstrate the readiness of both parties to compromise and their willingness to accelerate the referendum process.

The European Union also strongly encourages the parties and interested States to effectively formalize the presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Territory and to conclude the refugee repatriation protocol.

Likewise, the European Union stresses the need for the prompt signing of the still outstanding status-of-forces agreement on MINURSO.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General towards a just, fair and lasting solution for Western Sahara. We call upon the parties to fully cooperate with the United Nations in order to make substantial and speedy progress in the implementation of the Settlement Plan in all its aspects.

United Nations A/54/59

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 January 1999

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth ageing, disabled persons and the family

Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/83 of 12 December 1997 on policies and programmes involving youth, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution and, in particular, on progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

2. The present report is based on the statements and papers prepared by Member States, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental youth organizations and intergovernmental organizations for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, 8–12 August 1998) and for the World Youth Forum at its third session (Braga, Portugal, 2–7 August 1998), as well as statements by Member States to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.[1] In addition, other material was used to prepare the report, in particular, information on youth policies and programmes as collected by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development, Youth Unit, during 1997–1998.

3. While the present report is concerned with the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, it also takes into account the youth-related concerns and relevant follow-up action of other programmes of action adopted by nine world conferences convened by the United Nations since 1992: Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the Programme of Action, adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul, 1996), the Programme of Action adopted by the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21 (New York, 1997) and by the special session of the General Assembly devoted to countering the world drug problem together (New York, 1998).

II. Priority youth issues for the twenty-first century

A. Evolution and growth of the priority youth issues

1. Global definition of youth

4. The General Assembly first defined youth in 1985 for the International Youth Year. By endorsing the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth, the Assembly, for statistical purposes, defined those persons between 15 and 24 years of age as youth, without prejudice to other definitions of Member States (A/40/256, para. 19). When the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995, adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, it reiterated that the United Nations defined youth as the age cohort 15–24. Yet it further stated that, apart from the statistical definition of the term youth mentioned above, the meaning of the term youth varied in different societies around the world and that definitions of youth had changed continuously in response to fluctuating political, economic and sociocultural circumstances. However, since 1985, all the statistical services of the United Nations system have used the age cohort 15–24 to collect global statistics on youth (namely, the yearbooks on demography, education, employment and health).

2. Global situation of youth

5. Since 1973, the United Nations has published a series of studies on the global situation of youth. An updated edition will appear in 1999. In addition, the United Nations published *Statistical Charts and Indicators on the Situation of Youth* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.Y).

6. From 1990 to 1995, the world's estimated youth population grew by a relatively slow 0.4 per cent per year. In 1995, the world's youth population was estimated by the United Nations to be over 1 billion, or 525 million young men and 500 million young women. About 60 per cent of the world's youth live in the developing countries of Asia alone, while 23 per cent live in the developing regions of Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

7. The annual growth rate of the youth population in the 1990s continues to be highest in northern Africa (about 3 per cent) and is also relatively high (more than 2 per cent) in sub-Saharan Africa, south-central Asia and western Asia. Annual growth has slightly increased in Latin America and the Caribbean, south-eastern Asia and Oceania. It has

slightly decreased in the developed regions and is lowest in eastern Asia (where the youth population is decreasing by about 1 per cent per year). From 1980 to 1995, the percentage of the world's population represented by youth declined slightly, from 19 to 18 per cent. This decline occurred in all regions except Africa, where youth as a percentage of the total population continue to increase.

8. Youth, like any other population group, have their particular concerns and problems, which demand specific responses. Those concerns, problems and contributions must be integrated into social and economic policy and political decision-making. But is this happening? Is current experience satisfactory with regard to using political, social and economic policy to deal effectively with youth issues, such as unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, disease, lack of leisure-time activities, inadequate sports infrastructure, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse and trafficking?

9. Many countries have formulated strategies, policies, programmes and projects for young people. Despite those efforts, the situation of youth is still characterized by problems that make life difficult for them. In industrialized and developing countries, young people are living at a time when profound economic, political, social, cultural and environmental changes are occurring, resulting in both opportunities and constraints.

10. Globalization involves both opportunities and threats. More opportunities for trade and development should increase the wealth of all countries, which in turn is supposed to allow increased investment in human and social development. On the other hand, there is intensified evidence of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. More careful analysis is required to learn how these impact on the lives of young men and women.

11. The problems of youth must be seen in the context of the current state of international cooperation. For example, declining official development assistance undermines the capacity of many countries to meet their development needs. The external debt crisis has a crippling effect on low-income countries. These countries have to use their already scarce resources to pay back their external debt obligations rather than to provide essential services. Structural adjustment programmes in many countries are still inadequately attentive to the importance of social factors. Furthermore, the trade imbalances between developed and developing economies, favouring the more developed economies, place development at risk in many countries, and the current global financial crisis compounds the difficulty of social, economic and political development. Hundreds of millions of people are negatively affected by these factors. Young people are particularly affected, because it means that their transition to adulthood is made more difficult.

12. There are also constructive trends. Many countries are experiencing a deepening of democracy. In all regions of the world, there are signs that countries are introducing or planning steps which can lead to more democracy. In addition, many countries are actually putting in place mechanisms to increase and enhance the participation of citizens. This opens up opportunities for participation by all people. Young people will gain from this move towards more democracy. They have been contributing to the democratic process in many countries, and they have been expressing their desire to be given more opportunities to make constructive contributions. Nevertheless, there is still some distance to travel to make government more effectively accessible to young people.

13. The regional integration processes currently under way have implications for the well-being of young people. Will those processes lead to more productive employment for young people? Will there be more education and training opportunities for young people? Will young people have more access to quality and affordable health care? Will young people have a place at the decision-making levels of major institutions of society? These and other questions point towards the need to reflect on the meaning of both globalization and regional integration for the lives of young people.

B. Nature of the priority youth issues for the twenty-first century

1. National youth policies and programmes of an intersectoral nature

14. A national youth policy is a major instrument used by many Member States to address the concerns and problems of youth. Since the International Youth Year (1985), the United Nations has been promoting national youth policies that are cross-sectoral and integrated. This type of national youth policy is supposed to facilitate a comprehensive and coordinated approach to youth issues. It should serve to integrate youth concerns into national development strategies, aiming to end the marginalization of youth concerns.

15. As illustrated in the table below, out of a total of 185 Member States, 153 have formulated a national youth policy that is cross-sectoral in nature. Compared with a similar survey conducted in 1996, it shows that nine additional countries have taken this step; thus 83 per cent of Member

States now have a national youth policy. There are now 167 countries that have established a youth coordinating mechanism which represents a minor increase compared with the 1996 figure. Furthermore about 114 countries have implemented a national youth programme of action.

16. It would be interesting to see more evaluation of this improvement. What are the outcomes of those policies? What progress has been made? What are the obstacles encountered? What new approaches are needed to better address the concerns of youth in the context of an integrated and cross-sectoral national youth policy? It would be a service to countries and the international community to devote the necessary resources towards a comprehensive analysis of this experience.

17. The indicators used in the table below were also used for similar reviews by the United Nations in 1994 and 1997, and have illustrated significant progress by Member States in both the formulation and implementation of national youth policies and programmes. For example, only 29 per cent of Member States indicated that they had implemented a national youth programme of action in 1994, but the proportion grew to 62 per cent in 1998. Further details on each Member State can be found in the annex.

Summary of actions taken by Governments to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

Category	*Number*	*Percentage*
Countries that have formulated a national youth policy (cross-sectoral)	153	83
Countries that have designated a national youth coordinating mechanism (such as a ministry, department, council or committee)	167	90
Countries that have implemented a national youth programme of action (operational, voluntary service)	114	62
Countries that have taken all three types of action to implement the programme	95	51

2. Youth participation for development and peace

18. Since the International Youth Year was proclaimed in 1985, the General Assembly has defined youth participation as including four components:

(a) Economic participation, which relates to work and to development;

(b) Political participation, which relates to decision-making processes and distribution of power;

(c) Social participation, which relates to community involvement and the peer group;

(d) Cultural participation, which relates to the arts, music, cultural values and expression (see A/40/256).

19. Youth participation does not only provide opportunities for growth and learning for young persons; it also contributes in real ways towards the development of the societies in which they live. Countries benefit from ensuring that young women and men have opportunities to offer their ideas, vision and expertise towards the development of society. The General Assembly and the recent United Nations world conferences have therefore further emphasized and elaborated the value of youth participation in community development efforts and in society at large.[2]

20. Building on the above, youth empowerment includes the participation of young men and women not only in decision-making, but also in society through access to education, employment and health, as well as to resources, such as land or credit. The concept of youth empowerment concentrates on the growing opportunities for young people and their achievements in society, but recognizes that much of the potential of youth is yet to be realized.

21. As a new millennium approaches, it is widely acknowledged that democratic, tolerant and just societies are only sustained by citizens who can make educated use of opportunities for participation. Young women and men should therefore be involved from childhood in decisions relating to their own lives, and step by step in democratic decisions for their school, their community, in local/national social and cultural organizations as well as at the national, regional and international levels. The active participation of young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of, for example, youth-friendly health services, drug prevention programmes and/or the national youth policy has been proven to add relevance and accessibility for the target group. Such youth participation at the micro-level can be promoted by national youth policy, and further research is needed on appropriate modalities for youth participation at all levels. Special attention should be given to the participation of girls and young women in all such activities for youth empowerment.

22. While there is general agreement on the need for enhanced youth participation, in many parts of the world seniority is valued, and younger persons are often excluded from discussions and decision-making that influence their lives. In traditional societies, the older generation

transmitted values and knowledge to the young. With increasing globalization, new communication technologies and the influence of media, the dichotomy between old and new, between the traditional and the modern, is pronounced in the relations between generations. Societies need to develop mechanisms for bridging this gap, and the participation of both young and old people in this endeavour is of crucial importance.

23. In this context, non-governmental youth organizations, youth centres and community youth groups play important roles as vehicles for adolescents and young adults to voice their concerns, often through concrete "learning-by-doing" activities, in non-formal education and leadership training programmes. Millions of young men and women around the world are organized in such youth movements. It has been shown that, with appropriate structures in place, young women and men are capable of electing their own representatives, taking decisions and providing leadership in areas of concern to them and to the communities in which they live. In the context of scarce resources for public programmes for young people, possible partnerships between the non-governmental and public sectors should be further explored.

24. In some countries, almost all young people are members of non-governmental youth organizations, while in other countries only a small proportion of the youth population is involved in such bodies. Some non-governmental youth organizations are also coordinated in regional or international networks and can therefore serve as the voice of young people at the international level, including at United Nations meetings.

25. Young people are disproportionately affected by war and violent conflicts, both as victims when homes and communities are broken and as actual participants in the fighting. Therefore, youth organizations have a special role to play in the promotion of peace and in conflict resolution. Many examples exist of efforts undertaken by civil society organizations in preventative and post-conflict peace-building. There is also a general agreement that multicultural understanding, tolerance and knowledge of human rights should be fostered in formal as well as non-formal educational institutions. The possible contributions by non-governmental youth organizations in conflict situations deserve to be further studied, as does the role of the United Nations system in that regard.

26. Poverty is one of the main obstacles to the empowerment and participation of young people. All over the world, young people are adversely influenced by poverty and unemployment, and the juvenilization of poverty is well-documented. Experience shows that poor people themselves can be key agents for poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods, and that they need to participate in the design and implementation of programmes intended to combat poverty. This is also valid for adolescents and young adults.

27. Processes of marginalization and social exclusion often begin at an early age. Effective youth policies and programmes which promote the full participation of all young women and men, including the more vulnerable groups, can prevent young persons from getting trapped in circles of exclusion. Young women and men who live and/or work in the streets, young people in conflict situations and young people who are affected by drugs or crime are among the many groups who need special attention.

28. There is increasing concern that the young generation shows apathy and a lack of faith in the traditional structures for participation. At the same time, young people have time and again been at the forefront of movements for democracy and social justice. This is a reflection of the challenge that young people face: to seek to be integrated into the existing order or to mobilize for change and development. Rather than voicing their concerns through established channels, many young people choose to "exit", and protest the status quo by remaining on the outside. Each generation indeed may need to "reinvent the wheel"; democracy needs to be claimed and owned. Societies that are sensitive to the voice of the young generation, through whatever channel it may be transmitted by citizens, have the opportunity to gain new ideas for how to organize an open and participatory society.

29. The level of youth participation in a society is reflected in its legislation. Youth-related legislation should be based on a comprehensive perspective on how young people are best protected and how their contributions to society can best be ensured. An evaluation and analysis of age-related legislation (on issues such as age of majority/right to vote, age limits for being tried as an adult when faced with criminal charges, minimum age for military service, age for the right to marry without parental consent) should be an important part of every national youth policy.

3. Youth and core social development issues

30. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond addressed 10 core social issues that impact on the lives of all young persons: education; employment; hunger and poverty; health; environment; drug abuse; juvenile delinquency; leisure-time activities; girls and young women; and the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making.

31. Each of the 10 issues deserves specific attention in the context of a national youth policy, which must be directly linked with national development policies and strategies. They are also interrelated and intrinsically linked. For example, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse are often direct consequences of insufficient opportunities for education, employment and participation, and also reflect the general situation that countries face. Consequently, investing in youth development has proven to carry long-term socio-economic benefits. Likewise, providing opportunities for young people contributes to social stability and cohesion, and is based on the linkages of education, employment and health in the overall development of youth.

32. In the context of international efforts for social development, most notably the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and in the preparations for its five-year review, the situation and participation of young women and men deserves special attention. Action towards poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and the strengthening of social solidarity is directly linked to the situation of young people. Adolescents and young adults are an important target group for all social development efforts, since they are often disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment and social exclusion and since the impact of such conditions during young age will most likely influence the entire lifespan. At the same time, young people can also be a major resource in the social mobilization needed to combat these very problems.[3]

33. When promoting "social services for all", adolescents and young adults need specific measures in the context of and coordinated with the overall national social policy. It is not enough to promote a comprehensive package of "social services for all". Young people have specific needs and are sometimes reluctant to utilize the available services. Peer counsellors providing confidential advice have served as excellent mediators between health professionals and their teenage target group. The now well-established concept of "youth-friendly health services" should be further extended and elaborated in other areas of social services. How can self-employment programmes or community development schemes become more youth-friendly, accessible and relevant to the needs of all young people? All efforts for social development and services relating to young people also need to be gender-sensitive.

34. The social development of young people can be seen from a rights perspective. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides protection only for the younger part (up to age 18) of the youth population of concern in the present report, the human rights framework at large (ranging from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Right to Development to, for example, a large number of International Labour Organization conventions dealing with labour standards related to young persons) contains ample evidence of the concern expressed by the international community for the rights of young people. The rights of young women and men to education, employment and health have been declared in a variety of international instruments and programmes of action, as well as for specific groups of youth, such as urban youth, rural youth, students, young workers and disabled youth. The right to development is an essential component of the youth development process and is directly related to the other rights mentioned above. The current challenge is the effective implementation and monitoring of these commitments in the context of broader efforts for social and economic development.[4]

35. An additional factor to consider in the planning of youth policies and programmes is the demographic shift towards older populations and longer life expectancy. In education and training as well as in the provision of health services to young people, this new dimension of the youth life period needs to be taken into consideration, especially in the context of the International Year of Older Persons.

III. Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

A. National level

36. The following information is drawn from sources indicated in paragraph 2 and treats three different indicators of such action: youth policy, youth coordination and youth action.

National youth policy

Africa

37. In Tunisia, youth are at the centre of the country's development plans. Policies are centred on promoting dialogue with young people and incorporating them into public life. As part of the Government's effort to encourage youth participation, national consultations have included 100,000 young people. Other political measures have also been taken; for example, a network of some 6,000 non-governmental organizations has been organized. The Ministry of Children and Youth, which coordinates the national youth policy of Tunisia in cooperation with other youth-serving ministries and youth organizations, recently

launched a national tribune for dialogue with youth to provide young people in all sections of the country with an opportunity to express their views to government leaders at local, provincial and national levels.

38. The Government of South Africa set up the National Youth Commission in 1996 to formulate and coordinate a national youth policy and various programmes to implement it. The Commission, which was inaugurated on 16 June 1996 by President Nelson Mandela, was established through the National Youth Commission Act (1996) as part of the Government's plan to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the problems and challenges facing youth. Section 3 (a) of the 1996 National Youth Commission Act stipulates that the Commission shall coordinate and develop an integrated national youth policy for the country. The 150 national youth organizations that attended the National Youth Summit in June 1997 reinforced this mandate with specific recommendations to ensure the consultative integrity of the process. To further enhance and coordinate the implementation of the Act, an inter-departmental government structure was formed to ensure uniformity of approach in the efforts of various governmental departments to address and service youth issues.

Asia and the Pacific

39. The national youth policy of China is based on both governmental mandates and partnership with youth organizations. Society as a whole is expected to engage in youth education work, promote the development of youth in morals, education and health, encourage and guide youth to participate in political activities, assist youth employment, guarantee young people's legal rights and interests, enrich their cultural life and make efforts to educate and rehabilitate juvenile delinquents. The State Education Commission coordinates the national educational policies on youth in cooperation with youth-serving ministries of the Government. The All-China Youth Federation is a united organization of all Chinese youth groups, a broad mass organization uniting young people of all backgrounds. At present, it has 45 youth and student organization group members. It has branches at the national, provincial and community levels. The All-China Youth Federation is entrusted by the Government with managing and coordinating the national youth policy of China.

40. Japan's national youth policy stresses the importance of active youth participation. The Youth Affairs Administration in the Management and Coordination Agency of the Prime Minister's office is in charge of national youth policy coordination. The Committee for the Promotion of Youth Policy is an inter-ministerial committee. The Committee, in which the ministers and the agencies involved make contacts or discussions, was organized since 1990. It has also formulated guidelines for the promotion of youth policies. As a result, the Government can actively promote youth policies with coordinating measures in various fields, such as education, employment, juvenile delinquency, personal development and family welfare. The Government also cooperates with non-governmental organizations. In particular, the National Assembly for Youth Development and the National Council of Youth Organizations in Japan are major organizations. The Government also has promoted international exchange programmes to enhance understanding among youth from different countries. In the Ship for World Youth Programme, many young people from different countries participate in a variety of activities for two months, both on board and in the countries the ship visits. A representative of the Youth Unit participates in this programme each year for United Nations youth week.

Europe and North America

41. In Canada, under the Minister for Human Resources Development, the Secretary of State for Training and Youth, Department of Human Resources Development, coordinates the national youth policy of Canada in cooperation with other youth-serving departments. The federal Government of Canada has a comprehensive range of youth policies and programmes, meeting the needs of young people with respect to health, social well-being, justice, human rights, employment and income security. These complement a wide range of programmes and policies that are the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments, including education, health and social programmes. The Government's youth policies have been developed with increasing emphasis on the direct involvement of young people. Canada has some of the highest rates of enrolment in secondary education among industrialized nations, but youth unemployment is one of the concerns of the Government. Canada is addressing that challenge through specialized programmes for youth employment. The Government also believes that the opinions of young people must be heard. Accordingly, it met with 100 representatives of youth organizations to develop its position for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, which was held from 8 to 12 August 1998 in Portugal.

42. In Portugal, a minister is responsible for youth, sport and drug addiction and the media. The Secretary of State for Youth Affairs has a youth advisory council, a support research and planning office, Portuguese Youth Institute and the Community Service and Conscientious Objector's

Office. Following the programme of the thirteenth Constitutional Government, the political priorities of the national youth policy are basically to stimulate civic participation and to promote the social and economic integration of young people. These priorities can be met in a dialogue with young people and in the development of a real, global, integrated, youth policy based on two types of areas: (a) horizontal, lending consistency to the sectoral policies of other government areas through an institutionalized form of coordination; and (b) vertical, stimulating young people's participation and the free creation and circulation of information, with the understanding that young people are real citizens and agents of social and cultural change. The Government is currently implementing various youth programmes of action in the areas of education, employment, health and drugs. The National Youth Council of Portugal is one of the Government's partners for youth work.

Latin America and the Caribbean

43. Argentina has a number of policies on youth. The Director of Youth Affairs (in the Office of the President) and the Ministry of Education and Justice coordinate national youth policy in cooperation with other youth-serving ministries concerned with labour, social security, health and welfare, public works and agriculture. All the political parties in Argentina are affiliated with either youth movements or youth programmes. Argentina, through its national youth policies, has recognized that the problem of family violence is an issue of growing importance, although no special policies or programmes have been put in place. Argentina, in its efforts to address youth-related issues through its national youth policies, is currently preparing a health care guide with excerpts from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan-American Health Organization and the Argentine Paediatrics Society. The Government has also created a training institute for political leaders based on stringent academic standards and ideological pluralism, and an effort is also being made to link educational institutions with jobs.

44. The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines embarked on a series of national consultations which involved young people and organizations to formulate its national youth policy. A national youth policy was developed and was accepted by the Government. The National Youth Commission, which serves as an advisory body to the Government on youth development, was also set up. This body consists of government officials, non-governmental organizations and representatives of civil society. The Government has also proposed the establishment of a millennium commission, which will chaired by the Prime Minister and will consist of you people. The commission is expected to give youth opportunity for direct dialogue with the Prime Minister, consultations will be held nationwide at the grass-roots lev Once the consultations are completed, the Government pla to have a national survey, following which a you information centre will be established to help youth to ha access to all forms of information relating to youth, you issues and youth organizations. The Government a foresees real growth in the economy, with youth busin initiatives enhanced by greater emphasis on the promot of micro-credit and training.

Western Asia

45. In Egypt, the President of the Supreme Council Youth and Sports, Ministry of Youth, coordinates national youth policy together with other youth-servi ministries. Established in 1965, the Council has 1,3 affiliated member organizations and serves as a planning a programming body which lays down the policy of you welfare in the various fields (for example, cultural, soci artistic). It also sponsors youth camps, competitions a study travel projects. The youth policy in Egypt devo special attention to disabled and, rural youth as well as you in areas with particular difficulties. The Council coordina its youth activities with the ministries of education, heal employment, social affairs and industry. Recently, Ministry has focused its attention on revising a strengthening youth legislation addressing the housi employment, education and industrial sectors.

46. The national youth policy of the Syrian Arab Repub is coordinated on an inter-ministerial basis and involves c major non-governmental organization: the Revolutiona Youth Union. The Union is an educational and politi organization. It consists of youth between the ages of 13 a 35 from different social groups, including labourers, farm and students. It was established in 1968 and has the supp of the Government. The Union has 1,200,000 members, whom 40.77 per cent are females and 59.33 per cent males. Most of the members are students from second schools. It cooperates with other concerned agencies preparing youth for life. It is usually involved in improv educational curricula and organizing educational activiti such as exhibitions, group discussions, lectures, scienti and entertainment activities, meetings with parents a dealing with vocational training matters. It cooperates w the National Union of Syrian Students in that regard.

B. Regional level

47. Pursuant to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex, paras. 116–120) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/55, the regional commissions were encouraged, within their mandates, to convene biennial meetings of regional non-governmental youth organizations to review and discuss issues and trends as well as regional action. During the period under review, several regional commissions followed up on those recommendations with the assistance of an earmarked grant from the Government of the Netherlands to the United Nations Youth Fund.

48. The Economic and Social Commission for Asian and the Pacific (ESCAP) prepared a report on the situation of youth in Asia and the Pacific (1996) and convened two regional intergovernmental conferences for senior government officers on youth (1996 in Beijing and 1998 in Bangkok), the latter to prepare for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. ESCAP also convened an Asia-Pacific meeting of youth organizations in 1998 to prepare for the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system.

49. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) prepared a report on the regional situation of youth in Africa for the first session of the Pan-African Conference on Youth and Development, held in 1996 in Addis Ababa, and the first session of the African Youth Forum, held just prior to that conference. ECA provided the venue for both meetings in its new conference centre and hosted two regional non-governmental youth organizations and expert meetings in 1996–1997 with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

50. The Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) convened a regional meeting of non-governmental youth organizations in Santiago in 1998, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations, the Latin American Youth Forum and the Caribbean Federation of Youth, to prepare for the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system.

51. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has undertaken several studies on various aspects of the situation of youth in that region over recent years (for example, drug abuse, urban settlements and poverty), but no direct cooperation was undertaken by ESCWA with the relevant youth-related intergovernmental organization (League of Arab States) or with the regional coordinating bodies of non-governmental youth and student organizations (the Arab Youth Union and the General Union of Arab Students). ESCAP and ECLAC have undertaken such cooperation with both regional youth-related intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental youth organizations in 1996–1998, and ECA began holding youth meetings in 1996 in conjunction with the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

52. Regarding advisory services to Member States on the strengthening of their implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, only ESCAP has organized a series of such advisory services in its least developed member countries. No such advisory services on youth were organized by the other regional commissions.

53. However, other regional and interregional intergovernmental organizations have provided both such advisory services and intergovernmental meetings to assist Governments in preparing national youth policies and programmes of action to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

54. The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Youth Affairs and Sports, established by the League of Arab States in 1983 in Rabat, held its twenty-first session in Cairo from 15 to 18 February 1998 and adopted a resolution on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. By that resolution it urged Arab ministers responsible for youth affairs and sports to attend the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and to encourage the participation of Arab youth delegations in the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system.

55. The Council of Europe's Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth, established in Strasbourg, France, in 1985, held its fifth session in Bucharest. The Conference adopted a final declaration on young people: active citizens in a future Europe: human rights, participation, solidarity. In that declaration, the European ministers declared that the aims and objectives of the Council of Europe's youth policy were, *inter alia*, to encourage associate life and all forms of action which embody democracy and pluralism, and to help all young people to participate more fully in the life of the community.

56. The Ibero-American Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, established in Madrid in 1987, held its ninth session in Lisbon from 5 to 7 August 1998 and adopted a final declaration on the elaboration of a charter of the rights of Ibero-American youth. In that declaration, the ministers, noting the importance of the fiftieth anniversary

of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the proposal of the second session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system for an international charter of youth rights, called for a charter of the rights of the Ibero-American youth to be elaborated by the International Commission on the Rights of Youth and Adolescents and to be adopted by the Conference at its tenth session in Panama in 2000. The Conference reiterated its support for the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth in that region.

57. The Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, established in Male in 1992, held its third session in Kuala Lumpur from 28 to 30 May 1998. The ministers adopted conclusions and recommendations concerned with three interrelated strategic areas of national youth policy development and youth empowerment. The conference noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in the introduction of the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative and its adoption as a practical model for poverty alleviation among young people. "Youth empowerment for the new millennium" was discussed as a special theme, and a policy framework was adopted for a Commonwealth plan of action for youth empowerment to the year 2005.

58. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting on Youth, set up in 1992 in Jakarta, held its second session in Kuala Lumpur on 17 and 18 November 1997. It adopted a declaration on Asian youth development to pursue peace and solidarity, progress and prosperity in the ASEAN region through the positive, active and proactive participation of youth and to actively promote the understanding of sustainable and balanced development among the younger generation. Priority issues included strengthening of ASEAN awareness, promotion of human resource development and attainment of equitable and sustainable development.

59. The Pan-African Conference on Youth and Development held its first session at Addis Ababa from 18 to 22 March 1996. That meeting was the first such ministerial meeting on youth ever organized for all Member States in Africa, and it included an African youth forum which brought together representatives of non-governmental youth organizations and youth-related agencies and organizations of the United Nations. The meetings were organized by OAU in cooperation with ECA. The OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission adopted, at its twenty-first session in Pretoria on 18 April 1998, an African common position for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. That position included the Dakar Declaration, adopted at the African preparatory meeting for the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, held from 23 to 27 March 1998. It called, *inter alia*, for an African youth fund, a programme of young African volunteers and an African charter on youth rights to be approved by the OAU Council of Ministers and ratified by the next OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

60. The First Baltic Sea Youth Ministers Conference was held at Visby, Sweden, on 5 and 6 June 1998 and adopted a plan of action for Baltic Sea cooperation in the youth field to develop among young people a common regional identity and understanding of the common cultural heritage of the region, while respecting cultural diversity, for the improvement of young people's living conditions and the development of their potential. The aim was also to promote the active participation of young people in the development of democratic and pluralistic civic societies of the Baltic Sea region.

61. The first Regional Conference of Youth Ministers of the Pacific Community was held in French Polynesia on 30 June and 1 July 1998. It adopted the Pacific Youth Strategy 2005 as a framework for addressing the increasing youth challenges in the Pacific region into the next century. There were six priority issues in the Strategy: (a) full participation of young people in development; (b) urgent action and practical responses to emerging issues including education, employment, youth health, environment, juvenile delinquency and promotion of peace; (c) youth skills development and capacity-building through training; (d) the role played by the private sector, churches, non-governmental organizations and youth organizations in youth development; (e) the collection, compilation and dissemination of information on youth development; and (f) assistance to the 12 small island States of the Pacific Community and support for entrepreneurial initiatives from young people.

62. Finally, the first Conference of Youth Ministers of the Portuguese-Speaking Countries was held at Porto, Portugal, on 3 and 4 August 1998. The Conference adopted conclusions and recommendations on strengthening communication and cooperation among ministers responsible for youth in the Portuguese-speaking countries and on the first session of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

C. Global level

63. During the period under review, there were two major global youth events to review and appraise as well as to better promote the implementation of the World Programme

of Action for Youth: one for Governments (the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, 8–12 August 1998) and one for non-governmental youth organizations (the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, 2–7 August 1998). The Conference was hosted by the Government of Portugal in cooperation with the United Nations, and the Forum was convened by the United Nations in partnership with the Portuguese National Youth Council. Both the Conference and the Forum were derived from the World Programme of Action for Youth (paras. 123 and 125 respectively), and both served to mobilize the basic constituencies or stakeholders of this Programme of Action: government ministers responsible for youth and leaders of non-governmental youth organizations.

64. The following focuses on what both of those global meetings recommended regarding national youth policies.

65. The World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, at its third session, adopted the Braga Youth Action Plan on 7 August 1998, in which it recommended the formulation in all States of youth policies, by the year 2005, which are cross-sectoral, comprehensive and formulated with long-term vision coupled with action plans, taking into consideration the guidelines set forth in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

66. The Forum also called for such national youth policies to be accorded a legal status and backed by legislative structures and sufficient resources, and encouraged all Governments to establish and/or strengthen youth focal point institutions within the governmental structure. It recommended that such national youth policies be formulated through a thorough consultation process between the Government and the national non-governmental youth organization platforms as well as other stakeholders in that process.

67. The Forum indicated that action plans should be utilized as guidelines for monitoring and evaluating the status of the implementation of youth policies by all stakeholders, especially by the non-governmental youth organization platforms. It proposed that the United Nations, in collaboration with other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, identify the best practices on youth policy formulation and implementation and encourage the adoption of the principles and experiences among Member States of the United Nations.

68. The World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth adopted, on 12 August 1998, the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, by which the ministers committed themselves to ensuring that national youth policy formulation, implementation and follow-up processes would, at appropriate levels, be accorded commitment from the highest political levels, including the provision of adequate resources.

69. The ministers committed themselves to developing national youth policies and operational programmes, at appropriate levels, to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, taking into account the national priorities, realities and limitations arising from different socio-economic and cultural development contexts.

70. The ministers also committed themselves to reviewing the situation of youth and their needs and incorporating young people's own assessment of priorities, through their participation in a consultative process, and ensuring that young women and young men actively contribute to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national and local youth policies, programmes and action plans.

71. The ministers likewise called for the introduction of measurable time-bound goals and indicators to allow a common basis for national evaluation of the implementation of such youth policies and programmes, for exchanges of best practices in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national youth policy and for action to mainstream national youth policy and international development, plans and programmes.

72. Regarding follow-up, the ministers invited all relevant United Nations programmes, funds and the specialized agencies and other bodies within the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank and intergovernmental organizations and regional financial institutions to give greater support to national youth policies and programmes within their country programmes.

73. In addition to the two global youth meetings, UNESCO convened the World Conference on Higher Education in Paris from 5 to 9 October 1998. The basic objective of the Conference was to look at the state of higher education in the contemporary world and to chart a new course for it in the twenty-first century. The Conference discussed the content of higher education and the organizational structures used to deliver such education, and called for a critical assessment of both the content and organization of higher education as the world moves into a new millennium and an increasingly globalized society. In that regard, the Conference adopted the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action,

and the Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development in Higher Education.

74. Another important global action on youth was taken by the General Conference of ILO in June 1998, when it adopted a comprehensive resolution concerning youth employment. It recalled the ILO action programmes on youth unemployment and noted the difficulties caused for many countries by structural adjustment programmes for economic growth and their potential to provide education, training and employment opportunities for young people. By adopting the resolution, the Conference, *inter alia,* called upon member States and, where appropriate, employers, workers and their respective organizations to implement a balanced economic growth strategy and to consider new and innovative policies and programmes to create employment opportunities for young people. The Conference called upon the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to instruct the Director-General of ILO when preparing programme and budget proposals, to make provision for follow-up of the action programme on strategies to combat youth marginalization and unemployment with a view to: (a) drawing up an international strategy for youth employment; (b) creating a database on youth employment; and (c) disseminating best practice information and research on employment initiatives for youth.

75. The Adolescent Health and Development Programme of WHO published in May 1997 a brochure entitled "Action for adolescent health: towards a common agenda" (WHO/FRH/ADH/97.9), which contained recommendations from a study group on programming for adolescent health convened jointly by WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF. It reviewed the scientific evidence regarding the effectiveness of key interventions for adolescent health, highlighted the essential factors and strategies needed to establish, implement and sustain programmes for adolescent health, developed a common framework for country programming and recommended priority actions to accelerate and strengthen programming for adolescent health, including the global and regional support needed for country-level programming.

76. To prepare for the special session of the General Assembly (New York, 30 June to 2 July 1999) to review the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 5–13 September 1994), UNFPA sponsored a series of youth activities on adolescent health, including a Caribbean youth summit on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (Barbados, 5–7 October 1998) and an international youth forum to be held 6 and 7 February 1999 in The Hague.

77. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), in close collaboration with the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, and with the support of the Governments of Canada, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, convened a Youth Vision Drug Abuse Forum in Banff, Canada, from 14 to 18 April 1998. The meeting brought together approximately 180 young people from 24 countries and adopted a set of recommendations entitled "The vision from Banff". That document was subsequently presented to the Secretary-General and to the special session of the General Assembly devoted to countering the world drug problem together, held in New York from 8 to 10 June 1998.

78. As a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 1996, Youth for Habitat (an international network of youth and youth organizations) organized a parallel youth programme during the sixteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, held in Nairobi in April and May 1997, in cooperation with the secretariat of Habitat II. During that programme, a three-year plan of action covering the years 1997 to 1999 was adopted to guide youth activities which would contribute to the implementation of the Habitat II follow-up. In that regard, the Commission on Human Settlements at its sixteenth session adopted resolution 16/11, entitled "Contributions of youth to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda".

79. Many youth organizations participated in parallel youth events organized at the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, held from 23 to 27 June 1997 at United Nations Headquarters. A message was adopted by those non-governmental youth organizations and distributed in honour of the session, and a representative of one of the organizations spoke at the session. As a follow-up, many non-governmental youth organizations attended the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (20 April to 1 May 1998) at United Nations Headquarters and presented the results of an ongoing youth project on indicators to monitor Agenda 21 and a new youth project on sustainable development learner centres.

IV. Review and appraisal: problems addressed

A. National level

80. Despite the progress indicated in the table in paragraph 17, the present report has indicated that many of the Member States that have adopted national youth policies have not done so on a cross-sectoral, inter-ministerial or interdepartmental basis. The present report has also revealed at least seven major obstacles to effective government action to implement an integrated national youth policy and programme of action: (a) inadequate political will to focus on both the problems and potentials of youth; (b) lack of a conceptual framework and follow-up to design, implement and evaluate an integrated national youth policy drawing on the various youth-related policies of the sectoral ministries and departments of the national Government and its provincial and local agencies; (c) low budgetary support for the design and delivery of such policies to the target constituencies; (d) lack of adequate involvement of all stakeholders (especially youth and youth organizations) in the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating integrated national youth policies and programmes; (e) insufficient training opportunities for personnel from the youth-related ministries and departments of the Government to deal effectively with the needs and aspirations of youth; (f) problems in defining and treating youth and its subgroups and their varied needs (for statistical purposes, children are defined as persons aged 14 and under; youth are persons aged 15 to 24 years) and confusing policies and programmes for children with those for youth; and (g) lack of systematic national reviews of the situation of youth (jointly by the governmental and non-governmental organizations most concerned and with the possible participation of the private sector, which has a socio-economic interest in such surveys) and the linkage of this process to the formulation of a national youth policy. The challenge has been not only to formulate integrated national youth policies, but also to implement them at all levels (especially the provincial and local levels) and involving all stakeholders in the process (especially youth and youth organizations). When such initiatives have been taken, they have often not been mainstreamed into the overall national development process or linked to the provincial and local levels; nor have they confronted priority issues for youth regarding education, employment and health.

B. Regional level

81. There has been an uneven reaction by the regional commissions regarding the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/81 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/55 and the need for more serious cooperation between the regional commissions and the relevant regional intergovernmental youth organizations, which convene regional meetings of youth ministers, and the regional non-governmental youth organizations, which convene regional meetings of youth organizations, to better strengthen the capacities for formulating and implementing integrated national youth policies and programmes in the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The regional commissions were invited to convene biennial meetings to bring together these regional youth constituencies on a regular basis, but only ESCAP and ECLAC have begun to convene such regional youth meetings in cooperation with United Nations Headquarters and UNESCO headquarters and regional offices. Despite that progress, a review of regional intergovernmental action on youth since 1985 (the United Nations International Youth Year) has revealed that the existing regional meetings of ministers responsible for youth have been convened by other regional intergovernmental organizations and not the United Nations regional commissions.

C. Global level

82. The first initiative of the world community to stress the importance of integrated national youth policies and programmes came in 1985 for the United Nations International Youth Year. At that time, there was a wide spectrum of activity in the United Nation system to gather data, undertake research, convene meetings and provide advisory service, on request, to Member States on national youth policies and programmes. Yet, during the subsequent 10 years, activity in the United Nations system on national youth policies and programmes declined. One of the most important losses concerned the post of the United Nations Interregional Adviser on Youth Policies and Programmes (a post that was redeployed in 1990 after 20 years of existence). One of the most important outcomes of the International Youth Year was the creation of over 100 national committees on the Year, the subsequent strengthening and/or establishment of over 100 national youth policies and programmes and the development and growth of ministries and departments responsible for national youth policies and programmes. This momentum led, as described above, to the convening of meetings of ministers responsible for youth in

all five of the United Nations regions and to the convening of the first session of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in 1998.

83. In 1989, the General Assembly initiated a meeting that would eventually be called the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, and three sessions have been held since that time (in 1991, 1996 and 1998). A priority is to better relate the two new global platforms to each other and to both the standard-setting and operational activities of the United Nations system to a follow-up process with the regional commissions.

V. Recommendations for action

A. National level

84. For Governments, the first step is to formulate an integrated national youth policy based on the needs and aspirations of young men and women, as seen by the young people themselves and as surveyed by the local offices of the various national ministries and departments most concerned with youth. This involves both active youth participation in all phases of the process of examining the situation of youth and the formulation (with quantified and qualified targets) of a national youth policy from the bottom up and not the top down. The youth policy should be an integral part of the national development plans and strategies of each country. The role of representative non-governmental youth organizations should be recognized in that regard. The youth-related agencies and organizations of the United Nations system should facilitate this process by increasing support for such holistic treatment of youth issues by Governments in cooperation with non-governmental youth organizations, and by assisting the examination of the situation of youth and the formulation, implementation and evaluation of integrated national youth polices and programmes.

85. Countries that have already formulated an integrated national youth policy and are in the process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation are urged to examine how effective the national youth policy has been in resolving the problems facing young women and men and to share these vital experiences with other countries.

86. Interdepartmental cooperation is essential inside each Government as well as among the operational agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental youth organizations in each country. United Nations youth theme groups should be set up within the country programmes of UNDP to provide a coordination forum for United Nations agencies and related organizations involved with projects, programmes and other activities targeting youth. Such United Nations youth theme groups, as set up, for example, in Fiji, Malawi and Peru, have assisted capacity-building within the respective Government's Ministry or Department of Youth and national youth councils or other non-governmental youth organization coordinating bodies. The country representatives of UNFPA, UNICEF and UNESCO have often been in the lead in advocating and following up on such initiatives. This process should be strengthened and should involve all the operational agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as the relevant governmental, non-governmental youth organizations and bilateral development agency donor partners in each country. The United Nations information centres should sponsor information programmes to support this national youth policy and programme process in cooperation with Governments and non-governmental youth organizations and link such activities to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The United Nations Youth Fund should be strengthened and focused on this overall process of capacity-building of Governments and non-governmental youth organizations for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national youth polices and programmes to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth.

87. Governments as well as the United Nations system should place more emphasis on preparing and training young women and men and their organizations to participate fully in the national youth policy process.

B. Regional level

88. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/81 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/55, the regional commissions were invited to convene regional youth meetings on a biennial basis, bringing together representatives of regional non-governmental youth organizations, regional offices of bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and regional intergovernmental organizations concerned with youth to review and discuss issues and trends and to identify proposals for regional and subregional cooperation related to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Two regional commissions (ESCAP and ECLAC) convened such regional youth meetings in 1998, in cooperation with UNESCO and UNFPA, to prepare for the third session of the World Youth

Forum of the United Nations system, and ECA assisted OAU in the convening of such a regional youth meeting in 1996 in conjunction with the first session of the Pan-African Conference on Youth and Development. Such biennial regional youth meetings should be scheduled and held just prior to the regional meetings of ministers responsible for youth in each of the five United Nations regions so as to make recommendations to those intergovernmental ministerial meetings and to encourage Governments, non-governmental youth organizations, United Nations agencies and other youth-related intergovernmental organizations to work together to follow up on such recommendations, especially those concerning national youth policies and programmes. The meetings could provide the needed regional infrastructure to both prepare for and follow up on the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system and a body to undertake both youth policy and project execution in each region. A four-year plan (1999–2002) has been formulated by the Youth Unit to follow up on the global youth events in Portugal with regional youth action based on the mandates of the Assembly and the Council (Assembly resolution 50/81, annex, para. 120, and Council resolution 1997/55, para. 3). It involves cooperating with the regional commissions: (a) to convene biennial meetings of regional non-governmental youth organizations, regional offices of youth-related bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and regional intergovernmental organizations to review and appraise the regional implementation of the Programme of Action and to propose new action; and (b) to provide advisory services, on request, to strengthen the capacity of Member States for integrated national youth policies and programmes.

89. In the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth, the regional commissions should pay more attention to building youth development networks in each region, aiming to share experiences and resources, monitor the situation of youth in each region and to build solidarity among organizations working to serve young people. Regional non-governmental youth organizations, in particular the youth coordination platforms, should be strengthened with the necessary financial, human and technical resources to allow them to contribute effectively to the youth development process.

C. Global level

90. The General Assembly, in adopting the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, made recommendations to strengthen five global mechanisms for implementing this Programme of Action: (a) the role of the Commission for Social Development in continuing its policy level dialogue on youth for policy coordination and periodic monitoring of issues and trends; (b) regular meetings at the international level, under the aegis of the United Nations, of ministers responsible for youth affairs, building on the current regional and interregional conferences of ministers responsible for youth affairs in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia; (c) annual meetings of the inter-agency group on youth in which all the bodies and agencies of the United Nations system concerned and related intergovernmental organizations can participate to discuss ways and means by which they can promote the implementation of the Programme of Action on a coordinated basis; (d) meetings of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action through the identification and promotion of joint initiatives to further its objectives so that they better reflect the interests of youth; and (e) the role of the United Nations Youth Fund to support the implementation of the Programme of Action through pilot action to encourage the participation of youth in devising and carrying out operational projects.

91. The General Assembly also made specific recommendations on five methods to monitor, promote and evaluate the Programme of Action: (a) data collection and dissemination of information; (b) research and policy studies; (c) planning and coordination; (d) technical cooperation, training and advisory services; and (e) outreach and partnership among specialized constituencies. Some initiatives have been taken on all of the above points, which deserve serious attention as a follow-up to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. The annual Inter-Agency Meeting on Youth should elaborate system-wide cooperation on each of those five points to better monitor and promote the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group should consider linking the normative and operational follow-up of the Programme of Action on a system-wide basis and in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

92. For the coming biennium, and as a point of departure for the new millennium, United Nations research and policy initiatives in the context of the further implementation of the World Programme of Action could include the following issues: the full integration of youth concerns into overall economic and social policy; the impact of globalization on

the lives of young people; the linkages between democracy and young people; regional integration and youth development; country experiences in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating integrated national youth policies; and experiences of training and apprenticeship programmes for youth employment. The results should be widely disseminated and discussed at the national, regional and international levels.

93. The World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth invited the Secretary-General to consider strengthening the Youth Unit of the United Nations Secretariat and to submit proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on ways and means to achieve that goal. The Secretary-General proposes to consider several measures, within existing resources, including the provision of: (a) teams of United Nations interns and volunteers (selected on a geographically balanced basis) to support the work of the Youth Unit on a regular basis; (b) interregional and regional advisers on youth to be funded on an extrabudgetary basis in coordination with the regional commissions; and (c) constituting an advisory body at an appropriate level to review the application of the terms of reference of the United Nations Youth Fund and priorities and means of strengthening its capacities, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex, para. 139. The advisory body itself would have no financial implications as the members would be drawn from New York-based representatives of permanent missions of Member States to the United Nations, as well as New York-based representatives of non-governmental youth organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Such initiatives could greatly strengthen the work of the United Nations in this field and, in particular, for the further implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

Notes

[1] The Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes and the Braga Youth Action Plan had been circulated in document A/53/378.

[2] For example, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (para. 107); *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992* (vol. I), *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8), paras. 25.9 (a–c) and 28.2 (d); *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18), para. 71; *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), para. 13.9; *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), paras. 60 (d) and 75 (l); *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements* (Habitat II) (A/CONF.165/14), paras. 118 (l), 120 (a) and 184 (a).

[3] For the text of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, see *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I.

[4] An international compendium of youth rights has been prepared by the Youth Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to provide an opportunity for young people to learn about their rights, as recognized by the United Nations in many commitments, especially the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex, para. 107 (b), and in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Annex[a]

Status of implementation of national youth policies, coordination mechanisms and programmes of action as at July 1998

Afghanistan[b c]
Albania[b c]
Algeria[b c d]
Andorra[b c d]
Angola[b c d]
Antigua and Barbuda[b c]
Argentina[b c d]
Armenia[c]
Australia[b c d]
Austria[b c d]
Azerbaijan[b c d]
Bahamas[b c d]
Bahrain[b c]
Bangladesh[b c d]
Barbados[b c d]
Belarus[b c]
Belgium[b c d]
Belize[b c]
Benin[b]
Bhutan[c]
Bolivia[b c d]
Bosnia and Herzegovina[e]
Botswana[b c d]
Brazil[c]
Brunei Darussalam[b c]
Bulgaria[b c]
Burkina Faso[b c d]
Burundi[b c]
Cambodia[e]
Cameroon[b c]
Canada[b c d]
Cape Verde[b c]
Central African Republic[b c d]
Chad[b c]
Chile[b c d]
China[b c d]
Colombia[b c]
Comoros[b c]
Congo[b c]
Costa Rica[b c d]
Côte d'Ivoire[b c]
Croatia[b c d]
Cuba[b c d]
Cyprus[b c d]
Czech Republic[b c d]
Democratic People's Republic of Korea[b c d]
Democratic Republic of the Congo[b c]
Denmark[b c d]
Djibouti[b c]
Dominica[c]
Dominican Republic[b d]
Ecuador[b c]
Egypt[b c d]
El Salvador[c]
Equatorial Guinea[e]
Eritrea[e]
Estonia[c d]
Ethiopia[b c]
Fiji[b c d]
Finland[b c d]
France[b c d]
Gabon[b c]
Gambia[b c]
Georgia[c]
Germany[b c d]
Ghana[b c d]
Greece[b c d]
Grenada[c]
Guatemala[b c d]
Guinea[b c d]
Guinea-Bissau[c]
Guyana[b c]
Haiti[b c]
Honduras[b c]
Hungary[b c d]
Iceland[b c d]
India[b c d]
Indonesia[b c d]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)[b c d]
Iraq[c d]
Ireland[b c d]
Israel[b c d]
Italy[b c d]
Jamaica[b c d]
Japan[b c d]
Jordan[b c d]
Kazakhstan[e]
Kenya[b c d]
Kuwait[c d]
Kyrgyzstan[e]
Lao People's Democratic Republic[b c d]
Latvia[c]
Lebanon[b c]
Lesotho[b c d]
Liberia[b c]
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya[c]
Liechtenstein[b c d]
Lithuania[b c]
Luxembourg[b c d]
Madagascar[b c]
Malawi[b c d]
Malaysia[b c d]
Maldives[b c]
Mali[b c d]
Malta[b c d]
Marshall Islands[b c d]
Mauritania[b c]
Mauritius[b c d]
Mexico[c]
Micronesia (Federated States of)[b c d]
Monaco[b c d]
Mongolia[b c d]
Morocco[b c d]
Mozambique[b c d]
Myanmar[d]
Namibia[b c d]
Nepal[b c]
Netherlands[b c d]
New Zealand[b c d]
Nicaragua[b c d]
Niger[b c d]
Nigeria[b c d]
Norway[b c d]
Oman[b c]
Pakistan[b c d]
Palau[e]
Panama[b c]
Papua New Guinea[b c d]

Paraguay[b c d]
Peru[b c d]
Philippines[b c d]
Poland[b c d]
Portugal[b c d]
Qatar[e]
Republic of Korea[b c d]
Republic of Moldova[b c]
Romania[b c d]
Russian Federation[b c d]
Rwanda[b c d]
Saint Kitts and Nevis[b c]
Saint Lucia[b c]
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines[b c d]
Samoa[b c d]
San Marino[c]
Sao Tome and Principe[c]
Saudi Arabia[b c]
Senegal[b c]
Seychelles[b c d]
Sierra Leone[b c d]
Singapore[b c]
Slovakia[b c d]
Slovenia[b c d]
Solomon Islands[b c d]
Somalia[e]
South Africa[b c d]
Spain[b c d]
Sri Lanka[b c d]
Sudan[b c]
Suriname[b c d]
Swaziland[b c d]
Sweden[b c d]
Syrian Arab Republic[b c d]
Tajikistan[e]
Thailand[b c d]
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[b d]
Togo[b c]
Trinidad and Tobago[b c d]
Tunisia[b c d]
Turkey[b c d]
Turkmenistan[e]
Uganda[b c d]
Ukraine[b c]
United Arab Emirates[b c d]
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland[b c d]
United Republic of Tanzania[b c d]
United States of America[d]
Uruguay[b c]
Uzbekistan[e]
Vanuatu[b c]
Venezuela[b c d]
Viet Nam[b c d]
Yemen[b c]
Yugoslavia[b c]
Zambia[b c]
Zimbabwe[b c d]

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[a] The data in the present annex have been taken from statements made by government delegates at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998.

[b] Formulation of national youth policy (cross-sectoral).

[c] Designation of a national youth coordinating mechanism (ministry, department, council, committee).

[d] Implementation of a national youth programme of action (operational, voluntary service).

[e] No data received on national youth policies, coordination mechanisms or programmes of action.

United Nations A/54/60

General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 January 1999

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Dialogue among civilizations

Letter dated 6 January 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the Declaration of Athens, entitled "The heritage of ancient civilizations: Implications for the modern world". The Declaration was signed by representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Egypt, Italy and Greece at the European Cultural Centre at Delphi, Greece, on 11 November 1998. I should like to add that in our perspective, the discussion on the item "Dialogue among civilizations" is not merely confined to the four signatories of the above Declaration, it is inclusive of all ancient and modern civilizations.

I should be grateful if you could have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Dialogue among civilizations".

(*Signed*) Hadi Nejad **Hosseinian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

99-00507 (E) 130199

Annex

Declaration of Athens

The heritage of ancient civilizations: Implications for the modern world

At the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, representatives of Egypt, Greece, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Italy gathered at Athens, at the European Cultural Centre at Delphi, Greece, on 11 November 1998, for a discussion on "The heritage of ancient civilizations: Implications for the modern world" at the dawn of the new millennium, an idea first proposed by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to further develop peace and mutual understanding among all peoples on Earth.

After considering the different issues directly related to the interaction among civilizations, the panel of experts has agreed on the relevance of mutual understanding and the exchange of knowledge to the cause of justice and peace in the world order.

The participants wish to express their appreciation for the initiative in view of the difficulties of ethnic strife and other aspects of political, religious and social intolerance being faced at present by many countries. The participants wish to confirm their refusal of theories that advocate confrontation, conflict and inequality based on the presumed superiority of any people, in the present as well as in the past. Civilizations are the product of many people working together over long periods of time. The more that scientific research penetrates the formative processes of all the great civilizations, the more the complex web of interactions that made them possible are revealed. Beyond military conquests and declarations of supremacy, we can see a hidden pattern of diversity and tolerance that ultimately laid the foundations for each new synthesis. The civilizations of Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Greece and ancient Italy developed between the third and first millennia B.C. as constructions realized by the joint efforts of many different peoples, which, often through interaction, contributed to humanity's progress. The participants confirm their conviction in and recognition of pluralism in all civilizations in the framework of mutual respect and peace.

For these reasons there is no substitute for a continuous dialogue among civilizations based on equality and mutual respect. Our target should be the elevation of human experience and knowledge based on respect for individuality and diversity. Dialogue among civilizations contributes to human progress. Mankind has a long way to go and we cannot fail to save every expression of humanity through time.

The participants at the Athens meeting have agreed that, in consideration of the complexities of the historical problems involved, a number of different meetings and events should be planned over the next two years. The participants support a strategy of extending the debate from the panel of experts to a wider public by organizing a number of seminars to bring different facts and opinions together within a single perspective. In 1999, a preparatory meeting in April and a major seminar in October should be organized to gather a number of highly qualified specialists to present the specific characters, the formative processes, the state of knowledge and the diffusion of each civilization. The papers presented should be published and circulated immediately after the conclusion of the meetings. These texts will form the basis for future development of the collaboration. The organization of a major international conference, to be held in the year 2000, where the discussion could focus more concretely on the second aspect of our programme, "Implications for the modern world", could be planned.

Since the General Assembly of the United Nations has dedicated the year 2001 to the dialogue among civilizations, the participants of the Athens panel hereby propose that the programme of events concerning the heritage of ancient civilizations should be largely directed towards producing significant results before the major events of that year. For this purpose, the representatives of the four countries have agreed to direct any further deliberations to their respective Governments.

Egypt

(*Signed*) Mohamed E. Khalil,
Ambassador of Egypt to Greece

(*Signed*) Ambassador Nabil Badr,
Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Greece

(*Signed*) Professor Vassilis Karasmanis,
Director of the European Cultural Centre of Delphi

(*Signed*) Ambassador Apostolos Anninos,
Director of Cultural Affairs, M.F.A.

Islamic Republic of Iran

(*Signed*) Mahdi Khandaghabadi,
Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Greece

(*Signed*) Ambassador Gholam Ali Khoshroo,
Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Italy

(*Signed*) Professor Maurizio Tosi,
Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente,
Rome